



# NEWSLETTER

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY**



## MESSAGE FROM SDDVA SECRETARY WHITLOCK—A VISIT TO THE CEMETERY

As Memorial Day approaches, it is a great time to pause and consider the true meaning of this holiday. Memorial Day represents one day of national awareness and reverence, honoring those Americans who died while defending our Nation and its values. While we should honor these heroes every day for the profound contributions they made to secure our Nation's freedom, we should especially commemorate them and their families on Memorial Day.

Let us never forget how fortunate we are to live in freedom, and let us always commemorate our history and honor the sacrifices these heroes gave to protect that freedom.

Military life and ceremonies are inspired in tradition and symbolism. Funerals for our fallen are no exception. Let me share with you some of the symbolism of military funeral honors.

The bestowing of military funeral honors is a way to show the nation's deep gratitude to those who have faithfully defended their country. This ceremony is the final demonstration a grateful nation provides to a veteran's family.

One of the best-known military traditions is the 21-gun salute or three volleys from rifles. This ritual comes from traditional battle ceasefires where each side would clear the dead. The firing of three volleys indicated that dead were cleared and properly cared for.

(continued on next page)

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Operation Chow Line .....	3
Scott Joins SDDVA Team .....	3
Exercise ORCA.....	4
Exercise ORCA.....	5
Round Dance .....	6
American Legion Riders .....	6
MJFSVH Update.....	7
SD Veterans Cemetery.....	8
Upcoming Events.....	9

# VISIT TO THE CEMETERY

## (CONTINUED)

Originally composed to signal lights out, the somber tune of 'Taps' became a time honored way to pay tribute to service members honoring the extinguishing of a life.

At the end of a funeral, the flag is removed from the casket and folded by the honor guard. With each fold representing something different – the first – liberty, second – unity, third – justice, fourth – perseverance, fifth – hardiness, sixth – valor, seventh – purity, eighth – innocence, ninth – sacrifice, tenth – honor, eleventh – independence and the twelfth fold – truth. In the folding, the red and white stripes are finally wrapped into the blue, as the light of day vanishes into the darkness of the night. Sometimes a few of the shells from the volleys may be inserted into the back fold before it is presented to the family as an expression of gratitude for the sacrifice they have made.



It has also been said that the three sides of a folded flag are symbolic of the three colors in the flag, the three sided hat of the colonial soldiers and the colonists, the three branches of the national government, the three primary documents of our land (Declaration of Independence, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights), and of course, the three famous words form the soldier's motto - duty, honor, and country.

While visiting a cemetery, it's not unusual to see coins on a veteran's grave. The coins are symbolic that a friend was there. It's said that a penny means they visited and wanted to say thanks. A nickel means they trained at boot camp together, while a dime means they served together, and a quarter signifies they were with the veteran when he/she died.

As Memorial Day draws near, let us ponder the life veterans made possible for us by their commitment and sacrifice. They paid the ultimate price for freedom, and it is our duty to keep their legacy fresh in the memories of future generations.

Greg Whitlock, Secretary  
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs

# OPERATION CHOW LINE



SDDVA's Guy Arnold hosted an informational booth at Operation Chow Line in Yankton, Thursday, May 20.

Dozens of partners within the veteran network participated in this great resource fair and pancake feed.

Arnold used this time to brief veterans on state and federal benefits, services and programs. This is one of the first major outreach events that the Department has participated in since the pandemic.

# SCOTT JOINS SDDVA TEAM

Valerie Scott is the newest member of the South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs. Valerie comes to the SDDVA Claims Department with almost a decade of medical billing experience behind her.

She has garnered a passion for helping others get the care and support they need. With veterans being an especially underserved part of our community, she is excited to be able to give back to her community and country in the small way that she can.

Valerie's email address is: [Valerie.Scott@va.gov](mailto:Valerie.Scott@va.gov).

Please join us in welcoming Valerie to the SDDVA team!





# EXERCISE ORCA 2021

National Guard Civil Support Team units from twelve states, along with partnering local, state, and federal agencies and organizations participated in Exercise ORCA 2021 at various training locations in Anchorage, Matanuska-Susitna Valley, and Seward, Alaska May 17-20.

Exercise ORCA 2021 was designed to allow all participants to respond to hazardous materials incidents, test interoperability between the agencies, increase working relationships, and practice requests for assistance methods.

This year's ORCA 2021 was unprecedented with the number of National Guard CST units participating, and included units from California, Connecticut, Colorado, Idaho,



Ohio, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Washington, Wisconsin, as well as Alaska's 103rd CST, the 10th Homeland Response Force from Washington and the 8th CBRN Enhanced Response Force-Package from Colorado.

"We're conducting an all-hazards, multi-CST, multi-agency exercise," explained Col. Anthony Mortrud, commander of the 103rd Civil Support Team, Alaska National Guard. "This particular exercise is the largest chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear exercise held in Alaska."

Additional local agencies and organizations involved in ORCA 2021 included the Alaska Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, Matanuska-Susitna Emergency Management, Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation, Major Marine Tours, Alaska Railroad, Anchorage Fire Department, Alaska State Emergency Operations Center, University of Alaska-Anchorage, Port of Seward, and the Port of Alaska-Anchorage.

"Those are key relationships that need to be developed during an exercise," elaborated Mortrud, "because you don't want to do that during a real-world event. You have to work all of those bugs out before something happens, and that interagency play helps by developing tactics, training, and procedures between us and our civilian counterparts."

During the exercise, participants were faced with a number of challenges to work through, which included identifying illicit and dangerous substances, responding to simulated attacks and disasters, and coordinating with participating agencies to work through each scenario.

(Continued on next page.)

# EXERCISE ORCA 2021 (CONTINUED)

“They have a train derailment, a uranium dirty bomb, and a host of other problems to contend with at the different locations,” explained Warrant Officer candidate Jack Androsky, current operations noncommissioned officer in charge with the 10th HRF, Washington National Guard. “This exercise is designed to stress everybody out, and teach them how to manage chaos.”

Aside from working through all-hazard events during the exercise, another objective of the exercise was testing out the capabilities of the National Guard CBRN Enterprise Response Information Management System (NG-CIMS), a mission management and communications platform.

ORCA 2021 was the largest deployment of the system to date. NG CIMS is used in real-world incidents and events, including the 59th presidential inauguration this year, by multiple agencies involved in a scenario for synchronized interoperability.

The exercise in Alaska this week was the first time the system was used for multiple, simultaneous incidents, and it was accomplished on a large scale at three geographically separated locations.

“The complexity of how the system was utilized is a first,” said Sgt. Maj. Gary Mauk, NG CIMS technical advisor for National Guard Bureau. “It was being used to respond to a large, catastrophic event in order to share information between multiple sites and up the chain of command.”

NG CIMS includes software, communications networks and hardware, to consolidate, manage and share

information, allow reporting for personnel, logistics, operations data and more, and provide multiple communications tools for incident responders, to vastly improve incident management capability, minimize errors, and speed information flow.





# BLUE SUEDE SHOES WHITLOCK

Last week SDDVA Secretary Whitlock donned his “blue suede shoes” and danced the afternoon away at the Governor’s Round Dance in Pierre.

Drummers and singers were from the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe, Sioux Voices, and Lakota Tech High School.

Luckily no one stepped on his blue suede shoes and he was able to “rock it”!!!!!!



# AMERICAN LEGION RIDERS RENDEZVOUS

This past weekend American Legion Riders met in Pierre for their first annual ALR-SD Rendezvous.

They met at the Soldiers and Sailors World War Memorial Building and conducted a wreath laying ceremony in honor of those that gave the ultimate sacrifice.





# SIGNS OF SPRING AT THE STATE VETERANS HOME



Staff and residents at the Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home were busy this past week planting flowers. Spring has definitely sprung and everyone is enjoying the opportunity to be outside again!



# RIBBON CUTTING FOR STATE VETERANS CEMETERY

The South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs invites you to join us for a Memorial Day program and ribbon cutting ceremony on Monday, May 31, 2021 at 2:00 pm (CT) at South Dakota's first state veterans cemetery. The cemetery is located at 25965 477<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Sioux Falls (just north of 1-229/1-90 Interchange off Slip Up Creek Road and 477<sup>th</sup> Avenue).

Construction of the initial phase of the cemetery is completed, with interments scheduled to begin the first week of June 2021.

With all the earthwork and landscaping that has been done,

parking is  
very limited

at the Cemetery for the celebration. The Department is encouraging attendees to utilize transportation to and from the cemetery that will be provided by River Cities Public Transit. Bus rides to the event will originate at the South Dakota Military Heritage Alliance (1600 W. Russell Street) starting at noon and will run until 1:45 pm. Also, we encourage attendees to bring their lawn chairs.

Immediately following the ceremony, buses will begin transportation back to the Alliance Building. Upon arrival, guests are encouraged to continue the celebration with dinner and entertainment. The dinner will be provided from our partners with Keystone Treatment Centers and entertainment will be courtesy of the El Riad Shrine Chanters.





# UPCOMING EVENTS

- May 31—State Veterans Cemetery Memorial Day Program and Ribbon Cutting—2:00 pm (CT)
- Jun 1—PVT David Crow and PVT Dale Crow Bridge Dedication—Bison High School—2:00 pm (MT)
- June 11—VABHHCS Pine Ridge Stand Down and Enrollment Fair—Pine Ridge Pow Wow Grounds—10:00 am—2:00 pm (MT)
- Jun 13—Midwest Honor Flight Honor Ride—Begins at Military Heritage Alliance—Sioux Falls (1600 W. Russell Street)—Registration 12:30 pm (CT) and ride begins at 2:30 pm (CT)
- Jun 17-20—VFW 91st State Convention—Kelly Inn (1607 E. HWY 50)—Yankton
- Jun 24-27—American Legion State Convention—Crossroads (100 4th ST SW)—Huron
- Jul 21—South Dakota Veterans Council Meeting—Military Heritage Alliance Building—Sioux Falls—9:00 am (CT)
- Aug 16-18—SDDVA Annual Benefits School—Ramkota Hotel—Pierre
- Aug 23—Midwest Honor Flight Fundraiser at Barrel House—Sioux Falls (4701 E. 54th Street)
- Oct 23—Midwest Honor Flight Hangar Dance at the South Dakota Military Heritage Alliance—Sioux Falls (1600 W. Russell Street)



**HONOR RIDE**  
MIDWEST HONOR FLIGHT

*"RIDING TO KEEP THEM FLYING"*

**Sunday, June 13, 2021 | 2:30 PM**

Registration begins at 12:30 PM at the South Dakota Military Heritage Alliance. Honor a Veteran you know and ride to raise funds for Midwest Honor Flight. Ride includes a slow salute past the Sioux Falls VA Hospital before an escort to the new South Dakota State Cemetery.

**MORE INFORMATION & PRE-REGISTRATION:**  
**MIDWESTHONORFLIGHT.ORG/RIDE**

Midwest Honor Flight is a 100% volunteer organization. All proceeds from this event go directly towards future Honor Flight and more importantly, our local Veterans.

Audry Ricketts, Public Information Officer  
South Dakota Department of the Military <https://military.sd.gov/>  
South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs <https://vetaffairs.sd.gov>  
Soldiers and Sailors Building - 425 E Capitol Avenue  
Pierre, SD 57501  
Phone: 605-773-8242  
E-mail address: [audry.ricketts@state.sd.us](mailto:audry.ricketts@state.sd.us)

